Connecticut Historical Society BULLETIN

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View of fire on the membership certificate of The Firemen's Benevolent Society

EXHIBITION OF KELLOGG PRINTS

The first major exhibition in the new building opened Tuesday evening October 7, with one hundred and twenty-seven members and friends in attendance. A repeat of S. St. John Morgan's talk: "Kellogg Prints," by means

of tape recording was necessary at 9:30 P.M. The exhibition, itself, attracted much attention and drew favorable remarks from the local newspapers. This exhibition will remain in place until January, and all who have not yet seen it are urged to do so during the next two months.

The Kellogg print illustrating these remarks is an example of the research required in assembling an exhibition of this kind. J. G. Kellogg, the engraver, unwittingly confused researchers when he put Case & Nevers' sign on the building. This partnership existed in 1846-47 but the fire occurred several years earlier. In searching for a fire during this period we accidentally came upon the following notice in *The Hartford Courant,* January 15, 1846, page 2:

A Fine Engraving.

The Firemen's Benevolent Society of this City, have caused to be drawn and engraved for their certificates of membership, a representation of the fire several years ago in the large building next east of the Hartford Bank. The view embraces a part of the State House and Square, the range of buildings on the north side of State between Market and Main Streets, the firemen and their engines, spectators, &c and will doubtless appear familiar to all who witnessed the scene it describes. The drawing and engraving are both by Mr. J. G. Kellogg, and do great credit to his taste and skill.

Instead of Case & Nevers being occupants of the building at the time of the fire, it was Case & Skinner. With the information that it occurred several years before, we were able to identify the fire and quote the following news item from the *Courant* of August 5, 1839:

Fire.

Our citizens were aroused yesterday morning about half past 2 o'clock by the cry of fire, which proved to be in the large building owned by Walter Mitchell and George Beach, Esqrs., situated on State House square between the Hartford and Exchange banks; the flames soon burst from the 4th story and through the roof, and for a time it appeared impossible to save the building, but by the well directed efforts of our firemen who were on the ground with their usual promptness, the upper part of the building only was burnt, the goods on the first and second story were most of them safely removed. The occupants were Thomas Roberts, hardware, stoves &c.; Cutler & Pettibone, clothiers and merchant tailors; J. B. Eldridge, Patriot and Democrat office; Ellsworth and Dixon, attorneys; Walter Mitchell, do.; Giles Pettibone, do.; Elihu Geer, office of the Congregationalist; Lewis Skinner, Connecticut Observer office; Case & Skinner, copper-plate printers; S. H. Riddell's office. The greatest loss will probably be on the printing offices, which we understand are insured. Reed & Barber, were sufferers to a considerable amount from a new work not completed which was nearly destroyed. The building was fully covered by insurance in this city. The fire is supposed to have taken by spontaneous combustion from oiled rags in the room occupied by the copper-plate printers.

We have often had occasion to speak in praise of our firemen, and never have they appeared more deserving of commendation than yesterday morning—our citizens must, we think, be satisfied that the money which has been expended for improving the fire department and building reservoirs has been well appropriated.

JUST PUBLISHED

We take pride in announcing the publication of *The Hale, House and Related Families,* by Donald Lines Jacobus and Edgar Francis Waterman. This volume was published by the Society through the generosity of President

Waterman. The edition of two hundred copies represents a substantial contribution to the assets of the Society. It contains 914 pages, is completely indexed and is bound in green cloth. The price is $25 postpaid, though Connecticut residents are reminded to include the two percent State Sales Tax.

The Hale, House and Related Families includes extended research on the following Glastonbury families: Bidwell, Goodrich, Hills, Hollister, Kilbourn, Loveland, Talcott and Welles families. The Cooper family of Middletown and Springfield, the Leonard family and descendants of Anthony Stoddard are also given in detail. Over forty-five families are treated in the volume, which primarily contains material heretofore unavailable in print or which corrects errors that are in print in existing genealogical works.

The Vital Records of Saybrook 1647-1834 has also just been published. This is volume 9 in the *Vital Records of Connecticut* series. It consists of 197 pages, including a complete name and place index and is priced at $6, also postpaid. This publication was a joint effort of The Connecticut Society of the Order of the Founders and Patriots of America and this Society. Receipts from the sale will help publish additional volumes in the series.

Both of these volumes were issued in limited editions and will have a large sale to specialized libraries throughout the country. Individuals interested are urged to place their orders early before the supply is exhausted.

EVENTS SCHEDULED FOR NOVEMBER

As this is written, seven different organizations have scheduled meetings during November in our building. They are The Mt. Holyoke Club of Hartford, The Horticultural Society, The Numismatic Society, Ruth Wyllys Chapter D.A.R., The Wheaton College Club, Appalachian Mountain Club and The Hartford Bird Study Club. Nearly six hundred people are expected to attend these meetings. We are much interested in outside use of our building, and organizations desirous of using the available facilities are urged to contact the Director. Rates are extremely modest and in cases where we supply the program, there is no charge.

SPECIAL EXHIBITIONS

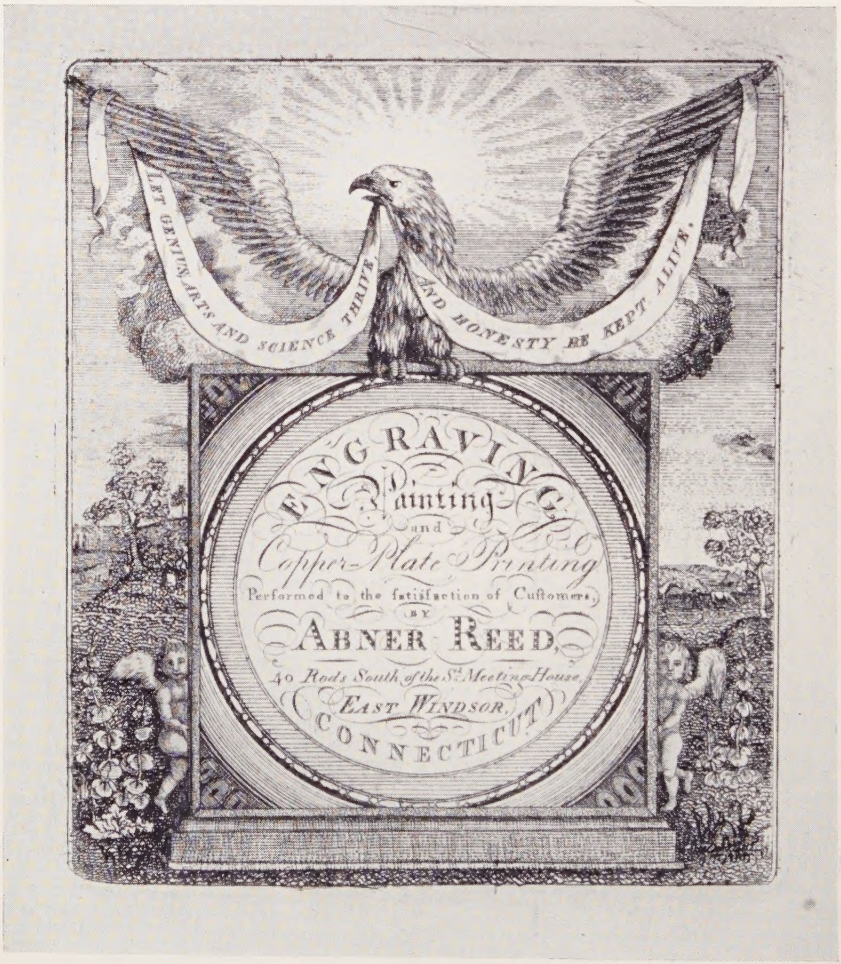
In addition to the Kellogg Exhibit previously mentioned, the first floor exhibition room features a selection of Rare Americana. Although primarily Connecticut, a few are of importance among any group of rare and valuable books.

A second edition of Eliot's Indian Bible that once belonged to the Indian Preacher, "Elisha" of Gayhead, is perhaps of greatest significance. The finest example of printing by Benjamin Franklin is illustrated with a copy of *M. T. Cicero's Cato Major*. Since this was to be read by elderly people, Franklin used large type for their convenience. Both of these volumes came from the library of our first Librarian, Thomas Robbins, who purchased them for three dollars each in 1819 and 1837 respectively. Their value today is many, many times that amount. Several titles are unique and others have associations which make them invaluable to the Society. Included in this group are Ezra Stiles' own copy of *The Annals or History of Yale College*,

New Haven, M, DCC, LXVI; John Chester's (a member of the State Convention which ratified the Constitution in 1788) copy of *The Federalist Papers;* and the Brinley copy of *Grateful Reflections* in which Thomas Robbins, a friend of the author, attributes it to William Wolcott.

ABNER REED

We have long been interested in Abner Reed of East Windsor. Shortly after becoming associated with The Connecticut Historical Society, we came upon a group of portraits engraved by Reed and from them became acquainted with the information written by his grandson, Henry Reed Stiles in volume II of *Genealogies and Biographies of Ancient Windsor.*



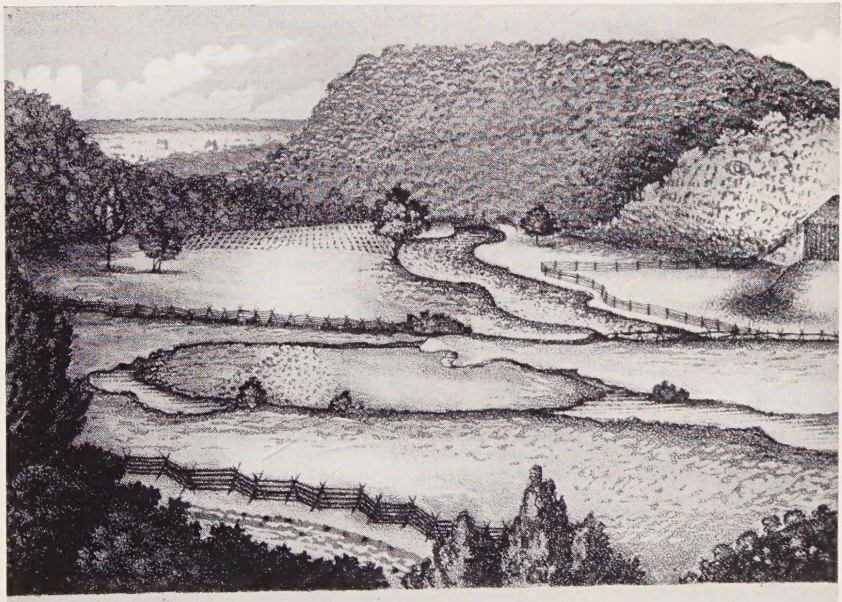
Trade Card of Abner Reed

Abner Reed was author of *Love Triumphant,* published in Troy, New York, in 1794. This was the first novel written by a Connecticut author and for a number of years headed a list of titles particularly desired by the Society.

About a year ago we were fortunate to acquire three volumes of Samuel Stiles papers. He was Reed's apprentice, son-in-law and partner. Included among the papers were some letters and diaries of Reed and samples of workmanship. The diaries were of particular interest for they indicate the wide assortment of skills that occupied Reed's life.

He painted signs, engraved and printed watch cards, engraved bank notes and engraved the fox, swallow and cat for Hudson and Goodwin's spelling book. For Dr. Cooley, he cut types, probably the labels for his pills or "Restorative Bitters." In November, 1803, Reed moved to Hartford where 8 rods North of the Bridge on Main Street he kept his shop. In *The Connecticut Courant* March 10, 1808 he notes: "He has on hand a number of Tavern Signs ready painted, of various devices, the name only wanting to complete them for hanging." Printed paper clock faces were also available as well as Christmas Pieces. In August, 1811, Reed went back to East Windsor while Charles Hosmer, publisher of *The Connecticut Mirror,* acted as his local agent. This same Hosmer was later Recording Secretary of the Society, 1839-1868.

This last spring, we acquired 8 copper plates by Reed and his associates, Samuel Stiles and G. Cobb. Original plates are not common for they were usually recut and eventually melted down. One of these plates is titled:



View on the WILLAMANTIC RIVER, adjoining the Mineral SPRINGS in Stafford, (Con.)

"View on the Willamantic River adjoining the Mineral Springs in Stafford. (Con.)." We were unable to identify the source of this plate until Morgan B. Brainard saw it and presented to the Library a collection of prints entitled: *Six Views in Aquatinta taken from Nature by A. Reed.* These views are labeled:

No. 4 [folding plate] N. Western View of the Hotel, and other Buildings, belonging to Dr. S. Willard, at the Mineral Springs, in Stafford, (Con.) Published by A. Reed, Engraver, Hartford, (Con.) June 1810.
2 N. Eastern View of the Hotel, &c at the Mineral Springs in Stafford, (Con.)
3 View on the Willamantic River [above]
4 S. W. View of the Old Furnace and adjacent Buildings in Stafford (Con.)
5 Continuation of Plate 4

WINTHROP LETTER

In the last issue of the *Bulletin,* mention was made of a valuable letter by John Winthrop. This recently appeared on the market and was purchased for $1,000. The purchase price was guaranteed by a member, and through solicitation, funds were contributed by the following: Miss Grace E. Bliss, Morgan B. Brainard, Newton C. Brainard, Houghton Bulkeley, Miss Katharine S. Day, Samuel H. Fisher, Ward S. Jacobs, Anson T. McCook, and Ethelbert Allen Moore. We are deeply grateful for these generous friends and, because of their thoughtfulness, future generations will find in their historical society this valuable record of Connecticut in 1643.

ISAIAH TIFFANY'S LEDGER

By Newton C. Brainard

From the ledger of Isaiah Tiffany of "Lebanon, New England" we get an interesting picture of the operations of a Connecticut colonial craftsman. This is ledger number 12, opened in 1746 with the latest entry in 1772, so it covers only part of a busy life.

He was a cabinetmaker and carpenter and from other sources we have learned that he was born in Bristol, Rhode Island on February 22, 1697/8 and died in Lebanon April 4, 1780. His early life was spent in Woodstock, from which town he moved to Lebanon in 1743. About 1754 he went to Norwich where he rented a house of Gershom Breed, later leasing his Lebanon home to Elijah Webster. At the time he moved to Norwich he already had some customers there.

After 1760 he made only an occasional piece of furniture. He worked mostly as a house carpenter with two or three men working for him.

A number of pages are missing from the ledger and as usual there are some that we would like to see. For instance, what were his transactions with Capt. Benedict Arnold? The credit account is missing but we find that the account was balanced. Of the £52-02-0 involved, £33-10-0 came as an order by Col. Trumble. It was paid the day it was received.

To most of us today the charges for furniture have the greatest interest. Most of the pieces were made between 1750 and 1760 and as we list the output of a single country cabinetmaker, with perhaps a couple of assistants, we can realize why so many antiques are still available.

The frequent charges for coffins first catch our eyes and we find that he made twenty-eight from 1750 to 1759.

In numbers, as might be expected, chairs lead the list. He made an even one hundred of them; variously described. There were small chairs and a small chair with rockers, chairs with three-slat, four-slat, cane and banister backs. The finish varied from coloured, what colour he does not say, to white and black.

Thirty-five tables come second in quantity. Again we have small and large, small square and square, kitchen tables, tea tables and rule-joint tables. Only one small table was "coloured." "A stand" was presumably a candle stand. Mr. Trumble's dressing table was "without trimming." This was natural, as we find from the "Contra" account that he it was who sold Tiffany his "trimmings." Lastly was a small table for the Meeting House, where he also constructed two pews. Church pews, in those days, were often the personal property of the occupants.

Next we come to picture frames. Unfortunately, he does not give the titles of the pictures, although maps were occasionally mentioned. Thirty frames was the total.

Beds were naturally a regular item. He turned many lesser objects, as well as the bedposts, such as warmingpan handles, mallets and drumsticks. One entry was for "rails and false posts," and there were also headboards, trundle beds, two cradles and a "bed for ye child." Thirteen beds was his output.

Chests served as closets in those days, so it is not surprising to find eleven listed. Little detail is given regarding them, although several were of pine, one had "two draws," and an extra charge was made when they were "doughtailed" instead of a simple rabbetted and nailed job. A "large meal chest" was possibly to hold grain for livestock.

Nine "cases of draws" were, of course, bureaus, and of the three desks, one had a bookcase and one was a "small writing desk."

Miscellaneous items were numerous, the most interesting being five wig boxes, three clock cases, two shoemaker's seats and three cartouch boxes. Clockmakers frequently sold clockworks without cases, which the customer made or bought. The cartouch box was probably one of the items of equipment which the members of the trained band had to supply for themselves.

In Charleston, South Carolina, is preserved the ledger of another cabinetmaker for this same period, 1768 to 1775. The contrast is striking between the output of our native artisan, working in a rural Connecticut town and that of a London trained cabinet maker with a wealthy city clientele.

Tiffany had one or two assistants. Elfe had, besides his apprentices, at least nine slaves, four of them sawyers who presumably got out the rough lumber, and five who were joiners and cabinetmakers. Both proprietors made the same items of furniture; that is, everything needed in a home of that era. Tiffany's pieces were undoubtedly simple, of native woods with little or simple ornament. Much of Elfe's pieces were of mahogany, many or most of them with carving and fretwork and even with gilded ornament. In about the same period of time Tiffany sold about 200 pieces while Elfe sold 1300.

An attempt was made to compare the cost of some of these pieces of two hundred years ago with their possible value today as antiques. The cur-

rency basis in that pre-revolutionary era, and the changes which have taken place since, made an intelligent comparison impossible.

NEW TAX LAW

On July 8, 1952, President Truman signed a bill which increases the limit individual taxpayers can claim as deductions for charitable contributions. The old law was fifteen percent; the new is twenty percent of gross income which may be deducted when contributed to charitable, educational, religious and similar organizations. The savings in Federal Taxes make the net cost of contributions amazingly low. For example, to a married person with no dependants with an adjusted gross income of $50,000, the cost is $364.40 per thousand dollar charitable contribution. Gifts may be in cash, property figured at the fair market value at the time of the gift (not the cost of the property to the donor), and securities.

This is of great importance to endowed institutions. Expenses have increased tremendously and in most cases endowment has not kept pace. Gifts to the Society last year amounted to nearly $10,000. This represents the income from $250,000 invested at four percent. It is not likely our endowment will increase in such fashion, but it is well within the realm of possibility to match and even increase the rate of annual gifts.

The Federal Government has seen fit to make this even easier than before. We therefore solicit your contributions and are in a position to suggest particular projects or objects for which there is need. Gifts in the past have made possible the publication of books, the purchase of expensive equipment and furnishings, and the acquisition of library and museum materials.

At the present time, for example, there is great need for a good slide projector for use with 35mm colored slides. We have long admitted our equipment is inadequate to project a picture forty-five feet and still retain the brilliance that is possible. This requires a machine with 1,000 watts, superior optics, and a built-in blower for cooling. The present projector was originally purchased for use outside our building and does a good job. However, our lecture room shows up its deficiencies. A solution to this problem will cost in the neighbourhood of $250.

On occasion we have rented a Wilcox-Gay Recordio and recorded panel discussions and lectures. This is expensive and awkward since the same equipment is used whenever the need arises to play back these recordings. Many of the lectures contain valuable information representing much research. In some cases we secure copies for the archives, but often times there is no record at all of subjects which would be of permanent value to others. Recording is excellent for use in panel discussions and committee meetings where every word may be important. It should also be used in interviews with persons who have lived or witnessed historic events. A file of tape recordings requires little space and would eventually be invaluable. A recorder costs $169.95 and tape for recording two hours costs only $5. and may be used many times provided the material recorded does not warrant preservation.

The price of these Bulletins is ten cents each.